

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS HANOI 000340

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

STATE PASS USAID FOR ANTOINETTE FERRARA
STATE ALSO PASS USTR FOR EBRYAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM COUNTRY GATEWAY LAUNCHED

REF: (A) 02 Hanoi 2601 (B) 02 HANOI 2762

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Marking another step in Vietnam's efforts to increase access to the internet, Vietnam and the World Bank launched the Vietnam Country Gateway Project in January. Understanding the importance of information technology to economic and social development, this project plans on providing Internet access throughout Vietnam. Furthermore, it seeks to create a central E-hub through which numerous databases can be accessed. This ambitious project has the potential to dramatically change the lives of Vietnam's rural population, which is extremely isolated. However, Vietnam's aspiration for such socio-economic development directly conflicts with the Government's desire to control the flow of information. Therefore, this project's success will ultimately depend upon the willingness of the Government to allow unfettered access to the Internet. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On January 16, Vietnam announced the launch of the Vietnam Country Gateway Project (VNCG). Sponsored by the World Bank as part of the Global Information Technology Development Program (InfoDev), the GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT GATEWAY is a system that seeks to create an "open" environment based on access to databases throughout the world from one central E-hub in order to foster economic development. The Vietnam Country Gateway will make information and knowledge available for domestic and international users. Furthermore, it will promote information technology applications in order to achieve further economic and social development.

13. (U) VNCG will focus on extending and improving internet services to promote the dissemination of quality information, catalyze the development of the country's Internet economy, and provide support to government and private sector initiatives for economic development and alleviation of poverty throughout Vietnam. VNCG's main objective is to broaden the capacity for providing Internet services to remote and rural areas of the country.

14. (U) The dissemination and exchange of information is crucial in order to achieve Vietnam's stated goal of integrating into the region and the world. Because of the potential impact of Internet technology on all socio-economic arenas and the project's community service nature, support of Government Ministries and agencies, local authorities, international organizations and funding institutions is essential. At this point the project seems to have solid support from all concerned.

15. (U) As the recipient of a 40,000 USD grant from the World Bank for the planning stage (an additional USD 600,000 implementation grant from the World Bank is expected to follow), Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications (VNPT) will provide guidance for development strategy, telecommunication infrastructure, and related policy issues. Vietnam Data Communication (VDC) will implement the program, with the Director and Deputy Director of VDC occupying the posts of project coordinator and project manager respectively (see ref B for an explanation of Vietnam's telecom sector).

16. (SBU) Comment: Speakers at the launch often referred to "world-wide internet access" and the "global database of knowledge." The question will be to what extent the GVN will filter and restrict this access, especially given recent regulations requiring registration of web sites (for further discussion of this issue, see ref A). This ambitious project has the potential to dramatically change the lives of Vietnam's rural population, which is extremely isolated. However, Vietnam's aspiration for such socio-economic development directly conflicts with the Government's desire to control the flow of information through website registration requirements, Internet filters, and censorship of the local media. Therefore, this project's success will ultimately depend upon the willingness of the Government to allow unfettered access to the Internet.

BURGHARDT